



LOUIS ARMSTRONG 1900-1971



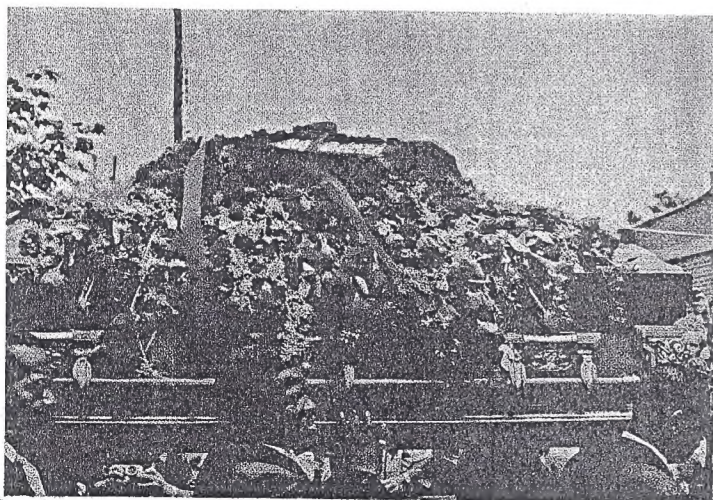
Taps for SATCHMO *Continued*

tan. All ages, colors and social groups were represented, though a majority were black and most were the "little people" who had enjoyed his singularly happy sound. Many never had seen him perform in person and knew of him only "from television," particularly the school children. But some shed tears and many, including those who had grown up in an era when his music was considered somewhat "old-timey," were aware of the true reasons for his greatness.

"He was a very beautiful musician," commented one young brother. "He was one of the roots of jazz for all the brothers who followed behind him, folks like Miles, Dizzy, Lee Morgan, Donald Byrd and all the others. All of them got it from him, even though his thing was more like ragtime. We aren't going to have another one like him."

Casual as this assessment might have been, it was totally accurate, for Louis Armstrong was the greatest single figure in the history of jazz music and a few critics even went so far as to call him "the man who invented jazz." More importantly, he was regarded as a giant and possibly *the* giant by his fellow musicians, regardless of the era in which they had emerged. The pianist Earl Hines, a formidable figure in his own right and one who played with Armstrong in his Hot Seven Group of the '20s, has credited "Satchmo" as a major influence in the development of his keyboard style. Miles Davis, ever an experimentalist in the newer forms of jazz, has stated that "you can't play anything on a horn that Louis hasn't played." Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie,

In New Orleans, an estimated 15,000 persons jam downtown area for memorial tribute to city's most famous son. Below, body of "Satchmo" is borne into Corona Congregational Church; his widow, Mrs. Lucille Armstrong, listens to an eulogy.





"Satchmo's" sister, Mrs. Beatrice Collins, came from New Orleans for funeral. Armstrong called her "Mama Lucy." In his book, *Satchmo*, he wrote about the difficulties of their childhood in New Orleans in the early 1900s.



Celebrities attending Armstrong funeral service included (above) New York Gov. and Mrs. Nelson Rockefeller and (below) New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay.



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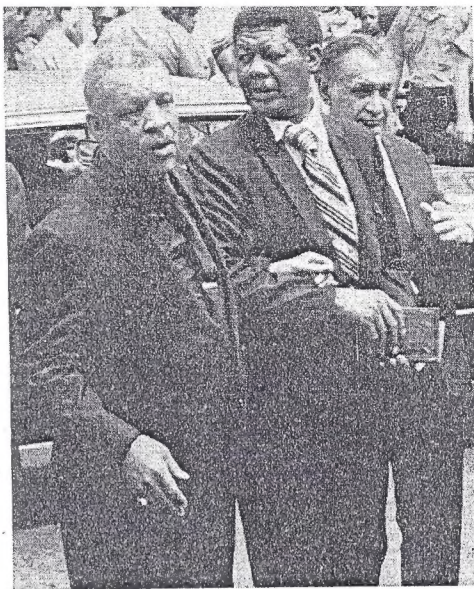
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Singer Ella Fitzgerald, a close friend of Armstrong, arrived three hours early for funeral service, sat quietly inside church, did not participate in the rites.



Singer Al Hibbler is led into church by escort. During service he sang *Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen* and slow version of *When Saints Go Marchin' In*.

Taps for SATCHMO *Continued*

a bop era revolutionary, has cited Armstrong as the one musician who set the pace for all instrumentalists, asserting: "His melodic concept was as near perfect as possible, his rhythm impeccable. And his humor brought joy into the lives, literally, of millions of people, whether black or white or rich or poor."

Though the public knew him in his later years primarily as an entertainer, a lovable figure who could take a hackneyed popular tune such as *Hello, Dolly!* and transform it into a work of art, too few of his followers were aware of the creative genius lurking behind the grinning black face, rolling eyes and other attributes of showmanship. If there was an element of tragedy in the career of Louis Armstrong, who was said to be a totally happy and benevolent man, it was that his image sometimes clouded considerations of his gift to the world of music. Furthermore, his major contributions were made in his earlier years, long before many of his present day fans were born. But his innovations were so great that they withstood the test of time, particularly in the way younger musicians built upon his foundation.

In many respects, Louis Armstrong *was* jazz and the course of his life paralleled formative stages in the emergence of America's most original art form.

As jazz is said to have been born, or at least most effectively cultivated, in New Orleans around the turn of the century, so did Louis Armstrong greet the world on the Fourth of July in 1900. As jazz was, in its incubation, primarily a music of the Crescent City's black masses, an affirmative shout echoing from the backstreet bordellos and funeral processions of the officially oppressed, so did Louis Armstrong learn about life in the crusty dives and joints from the very beginning of his impoverished childhood. A social worker's hypothetical consideration of his case would place him in the same position as the many black youths

of today who roam the urban streets, get into trouble by the time they reach their teens and end up spending time in some institution. But whereas many of these youngsters are crushed before they can find some positive force to give direction to their lives, fate permitted Armstrong to find a path to salvation through musical expression. When he was 13, he happened to be roaming the streets of his back o' town neighborhood and shot a pistol during a New Year's celebration. Thus he was sent to the Colored Waif's Home in New Orleans where a vital spark was lit when he was introduced to the cornet and music as a means of personal expression.

The details of Armstrong's musical experiences would comprise a book, but even the briefest account should note that he was the first to explore approaches to jazz music now taken for granted.

In 1922, when his idol, the cornetist Joe "King" Oliver, summoned him to Chicago to play second cornet with the famous Creole Jazz Band, Armstrong gradually began to reconstruct the position of the jazz musician as a virtuoso and he was the *first* great jazz star.

During a recording session in 1925 with his original Hot Five group, he invented "scat singing," using his rough-hewn voice like an instrument, dabbing and dipping through instant vocal improvisations with invented non-word syllables.

During the following 45 years, Armstrong became the world's most popular musician and even the U. S. State Department used him as an ambassador of goodwill, realizing that the beauty of his music could transcend international barriers. When he visited The Congo in 1960, warring factors halted in their battle to listen to *Satchmo*, as they called him, and he was one of the few Americans to be embraced by masses behind the Iron Curtain long before diplomatic negotiations took this bent.

An insight into his essence as a person, more than a public figure, is offered by the trombonist Tyree Glenn, who served as

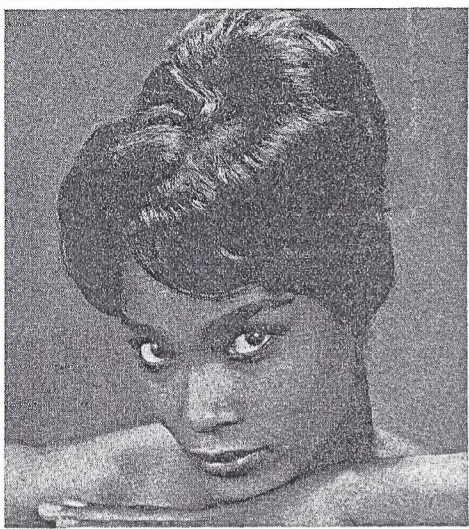


Singer Peggy Lee flew to New York from California to attend funeral and sing *The Lord's Prayer*. Complaints were heard from many black musicians who traveled great distances to participate in rites but were not permitted to.



Dizzy Gillespie, considered along with Louis Armstrong as one of greatest trumpet artists in history of black music, is ushered into funeral service. Many musicians were influenced by Armstrong and many attempted to imitate his style.

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Show business stars attending services included (above) comedienne Jackie "Moms" Mabley and jazz trumpeter Jonah Jones; (below) network TV hosts David Frost (with his musical director Billy Taylor) and Dick Cavett (right).



Taps for SATCHMO *Continued*

Armstrong's musical director until the end. Though Glenn had only played with "Satchmo" during the past nine years, he first had met this man who was his idol back in the mid-'30s and admits: "I was fascinated by the big sound he was able to get out of his horn. He played like a singer and every note of his had a pretty sound to it."

Glenn notes that Armstrong was a fatherly sort of man who never was too busy to talk to aspiring musicians. Though he accepted their adulation, he would caution them: "Find your own identity."

For some of these aspirants, Armstrong was such a hero that, as Glenn recalls: "Way back when I was playing with a band called the Happy Pals, down around Richmond, when we were on the road, some of the guys would stick their heads out the window, trying to get a cold and get hoarse so they'd sound like Louis."

Though Armstrong frequently was criticized for his silence on civil rights issues during the period of the big black movement, Glenn contends that he was the sort of man who did what good he could in little ways that would not bring publicity. "Once during the Depression when the band was playing the Royal Theatre in Baltimore," says Glenn, "things were so bad people couldn't even buy coal to keep themselves warm that winter. When he heard about it, Louis sent out and ordered a ton of coal and had them dump it in front of the theater. He told the people to take what they needed. He did a lot of things like that because he loved his people. He wasn't involved in no politics or anything like that, but he loved them and helped them when he could. When people would call him an Uncle Tom it didn't bother him because he knew *exactly* where he was at. He'd often say: "I know what it's like to be poor." And he never forgot it. He was his own man and he didn't do anything he didn't want to do."

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